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# THE VISITING NURSE DEPARTMENT



IN CHARGE OF  
**HARRIET FULMER**

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## **BABY DAY CAMP OF THE PROVIDENCE DISTRICT NURSING ASSOCIATION**

By **MARY S. GARDNER**  
Graduate of the Newport Hospital, Newport, R. I.

THE care of the sick baby in summer in the homes of the poor is a problem in every city and if the baby must be artificially fed, the difficulty is greatly increased.

Even in the cities where there is ample hospital accommodation, the problem is not solved, for while the hospital cures, it does not prevent illness, and it is well known how often a child is returned to an ignorant mother, only at once to fall a victim to the same disorder of which it has just been cured at the hospital. This has been seen too often to be ignored, and the social worker connected with the hospital, the district nurse, and others doing work among children, are striving to bring about a new order of things, and by education of the mother to strike at the rest of the matter.

All visiting nurses, however, know the hopelessness of entering a house, ready primed to teach milk modification and to preach fresh air and cleanliness, when they find a dirty, stuffy house, an impossible back yard, and a mother who certainly may be taught, but with whom the process will undoubtedly be a prolonged one. The question is, will the baby live while we educate the mother, for death does not await the convenience of others.

In some cities there are special arrangements to meet just this situation, places where the mother can take her baby for the day, and where skilled care will be given it.

In other cities there is nothing, except the already overtaxed children's wards of the hospitals, where in all probability the beds will be full of children more acutely ill.

Copying, though in a smaller and less expensive way, the Baby

Day Camps of Chicago, of which we first learned at the Visiting Nurse Conference, a day camp was started in Providence.

Some of the details of our modest effort may be of use to other visiting nurses, who, if they are to do anything of the sort at all, must do it economically.

A lady offered us her beautiful grounds, with a summer house and a broad shady piazza, also the use of the gas stove and telephone. The family was to be out of town for the greater part of the summer, and the house left in charge of servants. It was ideally situated for our purpose on the edge of one of the most congested parts of the city. The same lady also gave us \$100 toward equipment and running expenses. Beds, bottles, bottle racks and ice-chest were loaned to us. In buying the simple equipment the temptation to get "hospital supplies" was withstood, and only such articles purchased as could be afforded by the poorest mother, for the whole object of our scheme was to teach the mothers by example, and demonstration, what they themselves could do for their babies.

The ticks were stuffed with straw which could be readily removed, the measuring cups, pitchers, etc., were of agateware, the long table was covered with enamel cloth, the rubber nipples were kept in glass preserve jars; everything, in short, though scrupulously clean, was such as might be found in any home, for we hoped that the whole might prove valuable as an object lesson.

It was decided to limit ourselves to ten beds, so that the nurse might have time for instructing and talking with the mothers. We engaged a nurse with good experience in baby work, and we also engaged an assistant, a public school teacher, with an aptitude for babies, who was glad to use her vacation in this way, and who did excellent work under the nurse's guidance.

The District Nursing Association had added to the staff three special nurses, for the summer months, to do advisory work with children, and to these nurses was given the responsibility of sending in the babies.

One of the younger doctors took medical charge of the camp, and a large amount of its success has been due to his devotion to it, to his willingness to follow up the babies at home, and to his talks with the mothers.

The mothers brought the babies at half-past eight in the morning (on Sunday as well as on week days), having first bathed them at home. They brought with them enough clean diapers for the day. Of course, real diapers were rarely seen, but the stipulation that the clothes must be clean and not washed with naphtha soap was insisted upon. On arrival

the babies were undressed and a night-gown put on, their clothes being kept clean to wear home.

The milk was modified every morning for the twenty-four hour feedings, to meet the requirements of each baby, according to the doctor's orders, and at night every mother carried away with her the bottles needed for the night, paying for all five cents a day. The soiled diapers were also taken home to be washed, heavy paper bags being provided for the purpose. The articles used for each child were, of course, kept separate, while bottles, nipples, night-gowns and sheets, were boiled daily. The strictest care in regard to these precautions was observed, and the mothers instructed in a like care at home.

The mothers were allowed to come and see their babies at any hour, but they did not stay at the camp unless a child was dangerously ill. On the recovery of a baby, it was sent home to make room for a sicker one, but the children's nurses visited it regularly to see that instructions were being carried out, and it was often surprising to find how many of the camp ideas had been observed and how great an effort was being made to carry them out in the midst of discouraging home surroundings. Groups of neighbors and friends also visited the babies, giving excellent opportunities for instruction.

The camp was open from July 2 until September 4, during which time fifty-three babies were cared for at a total expense of \$252.61. We consider the plan a success, judged both by the good results gained by individual babies, and from the point of view of the education of the mothers.

The fact that it met a want was proved by the number of babies who came to it from all parts of the city, brought by the mothers and sent in by the doctors, by the eagerness with which the opportunity was sought, and the regularity of attendance even when distances were long and car fare hard to spare.

#### ITEMS

THE Visiting Nurse Association of Hartford, Conn., has moved its headquarters from 52 Spring Street to a larger apartment at 124 Windsor Avenue. The increasing demand for the visiting nurses' services has necessitated employing a fourth nurse, Winifred E. Moir, Backus Hospital (1906), Norwich, Conn. In addition to former work, the visiting nurse now investigates the home conditions of the patients from the Hartford Dispensary Clinic for Tuberculosis, and during the coming winter it is hoped to instruct tubercular classes. During the last year, social work among the children has been successfully conducted by Miss

A. H. McCormac, and in the summer months three hundred and seventy-two children have enjoyed outings in the suburban parks.

MISS CABANISS and Miss Minor came to the Tuberculosis Congress from Richmond. They have a most gratifying development of their work in the nurses' settlement to report. The Board of Health of Richmond has appointed two nurses and has placed them under Miss Cabaniss' direction. They will do tuberculosis work and were sent to the congress with expenses paid by the Health Department. A lady has given the salary for another nurse so that there are now six in all with the head worker. The three new members are Miss Isaacson, Miss Edmundson, and Mrs. Kennard. A pleasant incident of the summer was that the Governor of Virginia loaned his summer home to the nurses of the settlement for their own recreation.



THE X-RAY IN DERMATOLOGY.—The *American Journal of Surgery* says: Geyser concludes that the so-called X-ray burn is no more the direct result of the X-ray than the same reaction when the part has been exposed to the ultra violet X-ray, radium, or similar agents, and is, therefore, entitled to the name of radiodermatitis. The X-ray when brought into direct contact with the tissues is far more active than radium and furnishes clinically better results. There is no accurate means at present whereby the effect of the X-ray can be measured; the reaction is largely due to conditions existing within the body of the patient. The X-ray is not a cure-all, but has its indication in certain selected cases; whenever possible malignant growths should receive the benefit of radical removal by knife, cautery, or paste.

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HIPPOCRATES is still admired as the father of medicine, not for his theories, which are now merely historical curiosities; nor for his practice, which was doubtless poor enough; but for his method, which was sound and scientific as well as new; for his insistence on observation and study, especially of the patient; but above all, for his conception of disease as a natural rather than a supernatural phenomenon.—WILLIAM T. SEDGWICK in *Yale Medical Journal*.